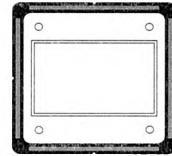


Zigzag Heron

Zebrius undulatus



This diminutive but chunky forest heron has been variously described as secretive and little-known² or not particularly shy³. Given the rarity of sightings most birders and ornithologists are likely to subscribe to the former view. Most would also agree that systematic survey of its preferred habitat of undergrowth by forest-hemmed pools, marshes and creeks in the tropical zone (to 600 m) would generate substantially more records within its broad distribution. It apparently ranges from the Guianas across to eastern Colombia, southward to the Bolivia–Brazil border in the west and the Santarém–Belém stretch of the Amazon in eastern Brazil. Males advertise their presence by their repeated “booming” from dense thickets of vegetation. This can occur at intervals throughout the night but peaks of activity are notably crepuscular. This feature, together with a variety of morphological characters, is sufficient for it to be placed in its own tribe, *Zebrilini*, within the bitterns¹.

The individual shown on the back cover was photographed (using a Canon 300 mm zoom lens) at La Selva Lodge on the Río Napo in eastern Ecuador and must be the best “staked-out” Zigzag Heron anywhere although seeing it is a different proposition. At 05h30 in pitch darkness and pouring rain it was photographed from a dangerously wobbling dugout canoe after it had finally decided to investigate the tape-recording of its own “booming”.

References

1. Hancock, J. & Kushlan, J. (1984) *The herons handbook*. London: Croom Helm.
2. Hilty, S. L. & Brown, W. (1986) *A guide to the birds of Colombia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
3. Meyer de Schauensee, R. & Phelps, W. (1978) *A guide to the birds of Venezuela*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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Zigzag Heron *Zebrius undulatus* (M. B. Robbins - VIREO)



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Lanceolated Monklet *Micromonacha lanceolata*
Patío, Nariño department, Colombia, August 1992 (David Gandy)



Zigzag Heron *Zebrilus undulatus*
La Selva Lodge, Río Napo, Ecuador 1993 (David Waugh)

